



## General Assembly

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### Seventy-first session

Items 19 (d), (e) and (f) of the provisional agenda\*

**Sustainable development: protection of global climate for  
present and future generations of humankind**

**Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat  
Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious  
Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa**

**Convention on Biological Diversity**

### **Implementation of United Nations environmental conventions**

#### **Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the reports submitted by the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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\* A/71/150.



# **I. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the United Nations Climate Change Conference, Paris, 2015**

## **A. Introduction**

1. The General Assembly, by its resolution 70/205 of 22 December 2015, invited the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to report, through the Secretary-General, to the General Assembly at its seventy-first session on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. The present report has been prepared in response to that invitation.

## **B. Outcomes of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties and the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol**

### **1. Summary**

2. The United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Paris from 30 November to 13 December 2015 and comprised the following sessions:

(a) The twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention;

(b) The eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol;

(c) The forty-third session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation;

(d) The forty-third session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice;

(e) The twelfth part of the second session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action.

3. The United Nations Climate Change Conference had the highest level of participation of all United Nations climate change conferences to date. It was attended by 19,260 government delegates, 8,314 observers and 2,798 media representatives.

4. It delivered significant results across all bodies: the Conference of the Parties to the Convention adopted 23 decisions and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol adopted 12 decisions.

5. The main outcome of the Conference was the adoption of the Paris Agreement, which, together with the accompanying decision (decision 1/CP.21), contains a structure of provisions that will allow parties to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.

6. The main elements laid out in the Paris Agreement are:

(a) A long-term temperature goal (article 2): to limit the global temperature increase to well below 2°C, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C;

(b) A global peaking of emissions (article 4): to achieve the temperature goal, parties aim to reach a global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, recognizing that peaking will take longer for developing country parties, so as to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources, and removals by sinks, of greenhouse gases in the second half of the century;

(c) Mitigation (article 4): establishes binding commitments by all parties to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions and to pursue domestic measures to achieve them. It also prescribes that parties shall communicate such contributions every five years and provide information necessary for clarity and transparency. To set a firm foundation for higher ambition, each successive nationally determined contribution will represent a progression beyond the previous one and reflect the highest possible ambition. Developed countries should continue to take the lead by undertaking absolute economy-wide reduction targets, while developing countries should continue to enhance their mitigation efforts and are encouraged to move towards economy-wide targets over time in the light of different national circumstances;

(d) Sinks and reservoirs (article 5): encourages parties to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases as referred to in article 4, paragraph 1 (d), of the Convention, including forests;

(e) Market and non-market approaches (article 6): establishes a mechanism to contribute to the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and support sustainable development and defines a framework for non-market approaches to sustainable development;

(f) Adaptation (article 7): establishes a global goal to significantly strengthen national adaptation efforts — enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change — through support and international cooperation. The Agreement also recognizes that adaptation is a global challenge faced by all. All parties should submit and update periodically an adaptation communication on their priorities, implementation and support needs, plans and actions. Developing country parties will receive enhanced support for adaptation actions;

(g) Loss and damage (article 8): significantly enhances the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts, which will develop approaches to help vulnerable countries cope with the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow-onset events such as sea-level rise. The Agreement provides a framework for parties to enhance understanding, action and support with regard to loss and damage;

(h) Support (articles 9, 10 and 11): reaffirms the obligations of developed country parties to support the efforts of developing country parties to build clean, climate-resilient futures, while for the first time encouraging voluntary contributions by other parties. The provision of resources should also aim to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation. In addition to reporting on financing already provided, developed country parties commit to submitting indicative information on future support every two years, including on projected levels of public financing. The Agreement also provides that the financial mechanism of the Convention, including the Green Climate Fund, shall serve as the financial mechanism of the Agreement. International cooperation on climate-safe technology

development and transfer and building capacity in the developing world are also strengthened: a technology framework is established under the Agreement and capacity-building activities will be enhanced through, inter alia, enhanced support for capacity-building actions in developing countries and appropriate institutional arrangements;

(i) Transparency (article 13): a robust transparency and accounting system to provide clarity on action and support by parties, with flexibility for their differing capabilities. In addition to reporting information on mitigation, adaptation and support, the Agreement requires that the information submitted by each party undergo international review. The Agreement also includes a mechanism that will facilitate implementation and promote compliance in a non-adversarial and non-punitive manner, and will report annually to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention;

(j) A global stocktake (article 14): to take place in 2023 and every five years thereafter, which will assess collective progress towards meeting the purpose of the Agreement in a comprehensive and facilitative manner. Its outcomes will inform Parties in updating and enhancing their actions and support, and enhancing international cooperation;

(k) Decision 1/CP.21 also sets out a number of measures to enhance action prior to 2020, including the strengthening of the technical examination process, enhancement of provision of urgent financing, technology and support, and measures to strengthen high-level engagement;

(l) Regarding non-party stakeholders, decision 1/CP.21 also welcomes their efforts to address and respond to climate change, including those of civil society, the private sector, financial institutions, cities and other subnational authorities. These stakeholders were requested to scale up their efforts and showcase them via the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action platform.<sup>1</sup> Parties also recognized the need to strengthen the knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples, as well as the important role of providing incentives through tools such as domestic policies and carbon pricing;

(m) In the Paris Agreement and its accompanying decision, parties emphasized the relevance and importance of the interlinkages between climate change and human rights;

(n) On the topic of gender equality and the empowerment of women, parties acknowledged, in the preamble to both decision 1/CP.21 and the Paris Agreement, that when taking action to address climate change, they should respect, promote and consider their respective obligations in relation to, among others, gender equality and the empowerment of women. This human-rights-based language is a first for multilateral environmental agreements. Additionally, gender-responsive action is referred to in articles 7 and 11 of the Agreement in relation to adaptation action and capacity-building, respectively.

7. The proceedings of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties serving as

<sup>1</sup> See <http://climateaction.unfccc.int>.

the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and a complete list of decisions adopted at the sessions are included in the reports on the sessions.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Leaders Event**

8. A Leaders Event for Heads of State and Government was convened on 30 November at the invitation of the President of France and the President of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.<sup>3</sup>

9. The event was opened with statements by the President of France, the Secretary-General and the President of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. During the event, statements were also presented by 142 parties at the level of Heads of State and Government, Vice-Presidents and Deputy Prime Ministers.<sup>3</sup>

## **3. High-level segment**

10. The joint high-level segment of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol was opened by the President of both sessions.

11. The President, the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session, the Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC delivered statements at the opening of the high-level segment.<sup>4</sup>

12. During the high-level segment, statements were made by 112 parties, of which two were delivered by Heads of State or Government, 2 by either Vice-Presidents or Deputy Prime Ministers and 108 by ministers and representatives of parties.<sup>5</sup>

## **4. Outcomes of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties**

13. In addition to the Paris Agreement, at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, parties took a number of significant decisions:

- (a) 2/CP.21: Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts;
- (b) 3/CP.21: Report of the Adaptation Committee;
- (c) 4/CP.21: National adaptation plans;
- (d) 5/CP.21: Long-term climate finance;

<sup>2</sup> FCCC/CP/2015/10 and Add.1-3, and FCCC/KP/CMP/2015/8 and Add.1 and 2.

<sup>3</sup> The text of statements made during the Leaders Event are available at [http://unfccc.int/meetings/paris\\_nov\\_2015/items/9331.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/paris_nov_2015/items/9331.php).

<sup>4</sup> The text of statements made during the opening of the joint high-level segment are available at [http://unfccc.int/meetings/paris\\_nov\\_2015/items/9333.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/paris_nov_2015/items/9333.php).

<sup>5</sup> The text of statements made during the high-level segment are available at [http://unfccc.int/meetings/paris\\_nov\\_2015/items/9345.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/paris_nov_2015/items/9345.php).

- (e) 6/CP.21: Report of the Standing Committee on Finance;
- (f) 7/CP.21: Report of the Green Climate Fund to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the Green Climate Fund;
- (g) 8/CP.21: Report of the Global Environment Facility to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the Global Environment Facility;
- (h) 9/CP.21: Methodologies for the reporting of financial information by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention;
- (i) 10/CP.21: The 2013-2015 review;
- (j) 11/CP.21: Forum and work programme on the impact of the implementation of response measures;
- (k) 12/CP.21: Enhancing climate technology development and transfer through the Technology Mechanism;
- (l) 13/CP.21: Linkages between the Technology Mechanism and the Financial Mechanism of the Convention;
- (m) 14/CP.21: Capacity-building under the Convention;
- (n) 15/CP.21: Terms of reference for the intermediate review of the Doha work programme on Article 6 of the Convention;
- (o) 16/CP.21: Alternative policy approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests;
- (p) 17/CP.21: Further guidance on ensuring transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness and effectiveness when informing on how all the safeguards referred to in decision 1/CP.16, appendix I, are being addressed and respected;
- (q) 18/CP.21: Methodological issues related to non-carbon benefits resulting from the implementation of the activities referred to in decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 70;
- (r) 19/CP.21: Extension of the mandate of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group;
- (s) 20/CP.21: Technical review in 2016 of greenhouse gas inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention;
- (t) 21/CP.21: Administrative, financial and institutional matters;
- (u) 22/CP.21: Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017;
- (v) 23/CP.21: Dates and venue of future sessions.

**5. Outcomes of the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol**

14. At the Paris Conference, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol also took a number of important decisions:

- (a) 1/CMP.11: Report of the Adaptation Fund Board;
- (b) 2/CMP.11: Clarification of the text in section G (Article 3, paragraph 7 ter) of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol;

(c) 3/CMP.11: Implications of the implementation of decisions 2/CMP.7 to 4/CMP.7 and 1/CMP.8 on the previous decisions on methodological issues related to the Kyoto Protocol, including those relating to Articles 5, 7 and 8 of the Kyoto Protocol, part I: implications related to accounting and reporting and other issues;

(d) 4/CMP.11: Implications of the implementation of decisions 2/CMP.7 to 4/CMP.7 and 1/CMP.8 on the previous decisions on methodological issues related to the Kyoto Protocol, including those relating to Articles 5, 7 and 8 of the Kyoto Protocol, part II: implications related to review and adjustments and other related issues;

(e) 5/CMP.11: Training programme for members of expert review teams participating in annual reviews under Article 8 of the Kyoto Protocol;

(f) 6/CMP.11: Guidance relating to the clean development mechanism;

(g) 7/CMP.11: Guidance on the implementation of Article 6 of the Kyoto Protocol;

(h) 8/CMP.11: Methodology for the collection of international transaction log fees in the biennium 2016-2017;

(i) 9/CMP.11: Capacity-building under the Kyoto Protocol;

(j) 10/CMP.11: Technical review in 2016 of greenhouse gas inventories and initial reports for the second commitment period from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention that are also Parties to the Kyoto Protocol;

(k) 11/CMP.11: Administrative, financial and institutional matters;

(l) Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

15. The General Assembly may wish, inter alia:

(a) To take note of the report of the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, as transmitted by the Secretary-General;

(b) To note the outcomes of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol;

(c) To urge parties to the Kyoto Protocol to deposit their instruments of acceptance in order to ensure the prompt entry into force of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol;

(d) To urge UNFCCC Parties to sign and ratify the Paris Agreement and deposit their instruments of ratification;

(e) To invite the Executive Secretary to continue to report to it on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

## **II. Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 70/206 on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa**

### **A. Introduction**

16. In its resolution 70/206, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the resolution at its seventy-first session. The present report constitutes an update to the Assembly on the principal activities that have been undertaken in that respect.

### **B. Implementation of resolution 70/206**

#### **1. Major outcomes of the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification relevant to the General Assembly**

17. The twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification convened in Ankara from 12 to 23 October 2015. The subsidiary bodies of the Conference, namely the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the Committee on Science and Technology held their fourteenth and twelfth sessions respectively during that period.

18. The Committee on Science and Technology forwarded recommendations to the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties on the outcomes of the Convention's third Scientific Conference, notably improving the efficiency of the Committee on Science and Technology; improving knowledge dissemination and the work programme of the Science-Policy Interface.

19. Similarly, the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention forwarded recommendations for consideration by the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties on eight issues that included: collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF); establishment of voluntary land degradation neutrality targets within national action programmes and national reports, including funding to support national level target-setting towards achieving land degradation neutrality; measures to achieve the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention; procedures for communication of information to be submitted to the Conference; progress indicators for trends in land cover, land productivity and carbon stocks.

20. In a landmark decision, the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties adopted a set of progress indicators to assess trends in land cover, land productivity and carbon stocks that could be used by parties for reporting to the three Rio Conventions and encouraged further work by the secretariat on the harmonization of indicators and reporting procedures.

21. The twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties also deliberated on the scope of the Convention and noted that a significant proportion of land degradation

occurs beyond arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid areas. It also recognized that parties may use the Convention to guide their policies relating to desertification, land degradation and drought. The Conference agreed that striving to achieve target 15.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 15 on land degradation neutrality was a strong vehicle for driving implementation of the Convention. The Conference also endorsed a science-based definition of land degradation neutrality as a "state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems". It invited country parties to formulate national voluntary targets to achieve land degradation neutrality in accordance with their specific national circumstances and development priorities and to explore options on how to integrate them in their national action programmes as part of their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Conference also mandated the development of options to increase incentives and financial support for desertification, land degradation and drought activities and the implementation of land degradation neutrality initiatives, including through the possible creation of an independent fund for that purpose.

22. The Ankara Initiative, which was launched at the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties, is also of relevance in this context. Through that initiative, Turkey and GEF announced that additional funding of €5.5 million would be made available for the establishment of voluntary national land degradation neutrality targets. In this context, as at July 2016, approximately 100 countries had committed to the land degradation neutrality target-setting exercise.

23. Parties also addressed the need for possible changes to the reporting and review process in the light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and decided to make the national reporting due in 2016 optional. The twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties decided to convene a special intersessional meeting of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention with a mandate to focus on the periodicity and methodological issues relating to the national reporting cycle. The fifteenth session of the Committee is scheduled to be held in Nairobi in October 2016.

24. During the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties, a special high-level segment was convened on 20 and 21 October 2015 that included three parallel ministerial/high-level round tables and three interactive dialogue sessions. The President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, inaugurated the special high-level segment.

25. Round table 1 discussed the theme "From global to local: translating land degradation neutrality into action". Ministers noted that land degradation neutrality was a new paradigm for sustainable development that would require policy measures based on science, with indicators that could be monitored. They noted that land degradation neutrality was a universally applicable target that had the potential to create jobs and economic opportunity for local communities in the long run.

26. The second round table focused on the theme "Drought adaptation: mainstreaming drought management policy in national agendas and mitigating the effects of drought". Ministers stressed that combating drought was one of the most important issues for the Convention and discussed practical policy options to tackle drought, ranging from the need to integrate drought management at the basin level,

making best use of indigenous knowledge, to developing cutting-edge technology, community mobilization and enhancing the capacities of drought-prone countries.

27. Round table 3 discussed the theme "Land-based approaches to climate change: resilience through sustainable land management". It noted that climate change, the loss of ecosystems and land degradation could not be addressed in isolation from one another. Comprehensive solutions were therefore urgently needed, especially for the rural poor living in drylands.

28. The high-level segment also included dialogues with civil society organizations and parliamentarians. An open dialogue session was held on 15 October 2015 with civil society organizations, at which a declaration was adopted. The eleventh round table of members of Parliament was held on 20 and 21 October 2015 and adopted a declaration entitled "The role of members of Parliament in the efforts to combat desertification/land degradation and drought: framing of legislation to protect and rehabilitate land in the context of strengthened resilience to climate change".

## **2. Linkages between desertification, land degradation and drought, and forced migration, instability and conflicts**

29. Against the backdrop of growing recognition, as noted in General Assembly resolution 70/206, that combating desertification, land degradation and drought could contribute to easing migration flows and reduce current and potential competition over scarce natural resources in degraded areas, the Executive Secretary of the Convention was invited by the President of the Security Council to deliver a briefing to the Council on 26 May 2016 on the theme "Peace and security in Africa: challenges in the Sahel region". The Council had convened the briefing with the objective of gaining a better understanding of the potential impact of climate change in the Sahel and its security implications, particularly the destabilizing effects that might exacerbate the traditional drivers of conflict in the Sahel region. In her address, the Executive Secretary pointed out that climate change was expected to accelerate the degradation of the natural resource base — land — on which 80 per cent of the population of the Sahel currently depended for survival, while projected global warming was expected to make matters worse in the Sahel by reducing agricultural production.

30. The Executive Secretary referred to her recent visit to northern Niger, to Agadez and Dirkou, cities which had metamorphosed from tourist hotspots and trading centres to major migrant transit points, through which more than 150,000 people pass each year.

31. Given the crucial significance of productive land and agriculture in the Sahel, the Executive Secretary urged investment in land rehabilitation in each of the front-line villages and communities. She pointed out that such a land-based approach would prove more cost-effective in delivering multiple benefits, including income generation, economic growth, strengthening of the resilience of local communities, enhancement of food and water security and, above all, stabilization of much of the region.

### **3. Follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

32. To follow up on the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Convention secretariat has been working closely with the United Nations Statistical Division and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators in providing metadata on an indicator for target 15.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 15.

33. In February 2016, the Convention secretariat and its partners convened a meeting with over 60 experts from organizations, institutions, Governments and the private sector to discuss the methodologies and data sets needed to monitor progress towards target 15.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 15. The discussions focused on how to deliver on global indicator 15.3.1 ("Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area") agreed to at the forty-seventh session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. There was a general consensus on the use of three sub-indicators: (a) land cover; (b) land productivity; and (c) carbon stocks above and below ground.

34. In May 2016, the Convention secretariat convened an inter-agency advisory group on indicator 15.3.1 of Sustainable Development Goal 15 to develop a detailed workplan with the aim of producing a complete methodology package with data options for the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators in early 2017. The secretariat, in consultation with the group, has contracted a team of international experts to produce good practice guidance for deriving indicator 15.3.1, including a standardized approach to data options at the national, regional and global levels. A comprehensive metadata document will be presented to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group for its review in early 2017.

35. The Convention secretariat has now begun a process of transforming its existing databases in order to collect data from national statistical systems for the purposes of reporting on indicator 15.3.1 and providing a storyline for the annual global Sustainable Development Goals progress report. The secretariat is also helping parties to build capacities at the national level focused on implementing and monitoring target 15.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 15, including national target setting.

### **4. Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility**

36. With the adoption of the land degradation neutrality target as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Convention and GEF secretariats pursued their consultations in the context of this new paradigm. The Executive Secretary attended the GEF Council held in Washington, D.C., in June 2016. In her address to the Council, the Executive Secretary highlighted the fact that land and its ecosystems were increasingly recognized as an important asset for sustainable development, including for climate action. In this respect, she encouraged the international community to invest more in addressing land degradation and called for securing a larger share of GEF investments, particularly at its upcoming seventh replenishment.

### **5. Global celebration of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought**

37. Celebrated under the theme "Protect Earth. Restore land. Engage people", the global observance event for World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought was

held on 17 June 2016 in Beijing. Hosted by the State Forestry Administration in the presence of the Vice-Premier of China and a number of ministers from various countries, the global celebration also featured the participation of the Secretary-General by videoconference.

38. The objective of the global observance was to demonstrate how the land degradation neutrality target could be a critical element for achieving other sustainable development goals, especially for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth. At the global observance, China unveiled an initiative to promote sustainable land management and land rehabilitation along the historic silk route.

39. In addition to the global observance, various events were organized by different groups around the world. As at the time of preparation of the present report, 61 events had been reported to the secretariat, from 48 countries. Further reports on the observance events are available from the secretariat's website.<sup>6</sup>

## 6. Partnerships

40. To follow up on the mandate of the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to explore options for the establishment of an independent land degradation neutrality fund, the Convention secretariat has been collaborating with a range of partners. The fund is, in principle, being structured as a public-private partnership for institutional investors, impact investors, development finance institutions and donors committed to supporting land degradation neutrality. A market potential study has been completed and a project pipeline is being developed.

41. The Convention secretariat has also been collaborating with the secretariats of the other Rio Conventions, particularly that of the UNFCCC, to advance recognition of the role of land as a potentially important carbon sink with the capacity to sequester important quantities of global emissions and a critical tool for adaptation. As a result, the land use sector is featured in more than 100 of the intended national determined contributions submitted for the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, as both a mitigation and an adaptation measure. Further, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has committed to produce a special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems, to be published in 2019. The report is expected to provide further scientific clarity on the role of land in climate change.

42. The secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification also collaborated with partners to facilitate the convening of the global summit of Heads of State and Government on the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative on the margins of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change. The summit was held in Paris on 2 December 2015 and was hosted by the President of France. It was also attended by the Secretary-General. The summit pledged \$4 billion over the next five years to step up implementation of the Initiative, while the States involved committed to restoring more than 50 million hectares of land, which is expected to help sequester an estimated 250 million tons of carbon.

<sup>6</sup> See [www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Event-and-campaigns/WDCD/wdcd2016/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Event-and-campaigns/WDCD/wdcd2016/Pages/default.aspx).

43. The secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification has also been advancing collaboration with the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, particularly on issues related to ecosystems, including terrestrial restoration. Similarly, the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification has also been collaborating with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, which has announced that it would carry out a land degradation assessment in 2016 and 2017.

44. Another significant partnership is the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative study, undertaken over a period of four years, which quantifies the costs of land degradation and sets out a universal approach for quantifying the economic benefits of sustainable land management. It aims to enable decision makers to better understand the overall costs and benefits when implementing policies and actions dealing with land. It was launched at a special event with the European Commission and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany on 15 September 2015. One of the main findings of the report is that adopting sustainable land management could deliver up to \$1.4 trillion in increased crop production.

45. The Convention secretariat is also working with a range of partners, from parties and United Nations entities to academic and civil society institutions to produce a global land outlook study. The global land outlook will be published in 2017 and is expected to present a new and transformative vision for land management policy, planning and practice at the global and national levels.

### **C. Observations and possible action by the General Assembly**

46. The overarching goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to "leave no one behind". More than a billion poor and hungry people live off severely degraded lands and have been left behind, despite the progress made under the Millennium Development Goals. Today, more than 2 billion people depend on just 500 million small-scale farms for their livelihoods, jobs, food, housing, education and more. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals target on land degradation neutrality will help to preserve these farms and restore them where degraded. In turn, this will speed up the ability of land-dependent populations to reach other Sustainable Development Goal targets: food, water and energy supplies, the education of women and girls, poverty eradication and adaptation to climate change. In this respect, the General Assembly may wish to look at the target concerning land degradation as a Sustainable Development Goals accelerator, given the central role that land plays in achieving most of the Goals.

47. The General Assembly may wish to note the land degradation neutrality project, an initiative that, at this early stage of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is poised to engage Member States towards land degradation neutrality. Further, the Assembly may wish to encourage countries that have yet to do so to set land degradation neutrality targets. The Assembly may wish to provide support to this process by inviting donors and international organizations, including the organizations of the United Nations system, as well as international financial institutions, regional banks and the private sector to provide the necessary funding as appropriate.

### **III. Report of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity**

#### **A. Introduction**

48. In its resolution 70/207, the General Assembly invited the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to report to it at its seventy-first session on the implementation of the Convention and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the difficulties encountered in the process of their implementation. The present report is submitted in response to that invitation.

#### **B. Preparations for thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties**

49. Since the issuance of the previous report to the General Assembly in August 2015, three meetings of the Bureau of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have been held — on 1 November 2015 in Montreal, Canada; on 21 February 2016 in Kuala Lumpur; and on 1 May 2016 in Montreal, Canada.

50. In preparation for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, scheduled to be held in Cancun, Mexico, from 4 to 17 December 2016, a number of meetings, including of the subsidiary bodies of the Convention, have taken place.

##### **1. First meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation**

51. The first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation was held in Montreal, Canada, from 2 to 6 May 2016. The Subsidiary Body was established at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to replace the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Review Implementation of the Convention, with a mandate to undertake four major functions: review progress in implementation; identify strategic actions to enhance implementation; strengthen support for implementation; and improve the efficiency of structures and processes in the operations of the Convention and its Protocols. The Subsidiary Body also covers the two Protocols to the Convention, that is, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Nagoya Protocol) and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Cartagena Protocol).

52. On the issue of enhancing implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Subsidiary Body, at its first meeting, recommended measures that could be taken by parties, including: updating national biodiversity strategies and action plans; mainstreaming biodiversity within and across sectors, with a particular focus on agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, and tourism; increasing the level of ambition of the national or regional targets, taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals; enhancing the use of economic valuation tools and environmental assessments; undertaking activities to enhance the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, subnational and local governments, and the business sector; and taking a more integrated and coherent approach to capacity-building and technical and scientific cooperation.

53. On the issue of synergies and cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions, the Subsidiary Body, examined the options for actions prepared by parties at a workshop convened in February 2016 and agreed to continue to work in close collaboration with the related secretariats of conventions to refine, consolidate and streamline options for action. The Executive Secretary will present the results of this collaborative work for consideration at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

54. On resource mobilization, the Subsidiary Body reviewed the progress made in implementing the targets for resource mobilization adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth meeting, based on the financial reports received from parties prior to the meeting, and urged parties that have not yet done so to complete their financial reports by 31 August 2016, in time for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting. The meeting also recommended that those parties that have revised and updated their national biodiversity strategies and action plans could begin to identify their funding needs, gaps and priorities and to develop their national finance plans as a matter of priority.

55. On the financial mechanism, the Subsidiary Body reviewed the progress made by the expert team in preparing the report on a full assessment of the funds needed for the implementation of the Convention and its protocols for the seventh replenishment period of GEF, and urged recipient parties that have not done so to complete the questionnaire circulated by the expert team by 31 August 2016. The meeting also recommended that decisions be taken at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the various aspects of the relationship between the Convention and GEF, including on a four-year framework for programme priorities for the seventh replenishment period, and on the fifth review of the effectiveness of the financial mechanism.

56. On the issue of national reporting, the meeting recommended agreed guidelines for the preparation of the sixth national reports and called on parties to submit their sixth national report by 31 December 2018.

57. The first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation also examined the results of the third assessment and review of the effectiveness of the Cartagena Protocol and the midterm evaluation of the strategic plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (2011-2020) and made a number of recommendations to the eighth Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol. It also recommended prioritizing operational objectives relating to the development of biosafety legislation, risk assessment, detection and identification of living modified organisms, and public awareness, education and training.

58. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation also reviewed progress made towards reaching Aichi Biodiversity Target 16, which called for the Nagoya Protocol to enter into force and be operational, and noted that the first part of the Target has been successfully achieved with the entry into force of the Protocol on 12 October 2014. It also made recommendations on measures to enhance implementation of the Protocol.

**2. Nineteenth and twentieth meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice**

59. The nineteenth and twentieth meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice were held in Montreal, Canada, from 2 to 5 November 2015 and 25 to 30 April 2016 respectively. The two meetings prepared a number of recommendations on a range of issues, which will be forwarded to the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties for consideration.

60. Among the key outcomes of the nineteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice were the identification of measures for the further implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The meeting also considered the relationship between health and biodiversity and its implications for the implementation of the Convention, as well as its links to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The meeting further examined the support of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the Body's relationship with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and recommended actions aimed at increasing cooperation, avoiding duplication of efforts and making most of the scientific information available through both processes.

61. The twentieth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice examined implementation of Aichi Biodiversity Targets 11 (protected areas) and 12 (threatened species) and mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors, including agriculture, forests and fisheries, and recommended measures to enhance implementation. During the meeting, the Body also welcomed the first assessment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on pollinators (March 2016), adopted a recommendation noting the importance of pollinators and pollination and provided advice on the potential impacts of pesticides on pollinator populations and how to reduce such impacts. A number of issues related to marine biodiversity were also considered during the meeting, including further work related to ecologically and biologically significant marine areas, the adoption of a voluntary workplan on biodiversity in cold water areas and guidance for preventing and mitigating the impacts of marine debris. Recommendations were adopted on a short-term action plan to promote the restoration of natural and semi-natural ecosystems, as a contribution to halting biodiversity loss, improving ecosystem resilience, enhancing the provision of ecosystem services, mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change, combating desertification and land degradation and improving human well-being, while reducing environmental risks and scarcities.

62. The twentieth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice also considered ways and means to address the risks of biological invasion associated with trade in wildlife, including trade via e-commerce and the movement of sea containers, and called for the application of the precautionary approach and appropriate risk analysis when using classical biological control to manage already established invasive alien species. Other issues discussed included ecosystem-based approaches to climate change mitigation, indicators for assessing progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and synthetic biology. On synthetic biology, the meeting took note of an operational definition for the term.

**3. Ninth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Inter-sessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and related provisions concerning traditional knowledge and customary sustainable use**

63. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Inter-sessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and related provisions met from 4 to 7 November 2016, in Montreal, Canada, to review its programme of work and assess progress on the development of guidelines on mechanisms for obtaining prior informed consent of indigenous peoples and local communities for access to their knowledge, innovations and practices, for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of such knowledge and for reporting and preventing unlawful appropriation of traditional knowledge. The Working Group also recommended best practice guidelines for the repatriation of indigenous and traditional knowledge, in order to encourage cultural restoration and the restoration of knowledge systems, which will be considered at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

**4. Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity**

64. As at 16 June 2016, the Nagoya Protocol had received 78 instruments of ratification, accession, approval or acceptance. Following the entry into force of the Protocol in October 2014, the focus of efforts has shifted to operationalization and implementation of the Protocol.

65. To prepare for the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol, which will take place concurrently with the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Cancun, Mexico, from 4 to 17 December 2016, a number of intersessional meetings and activities have been convened: the first meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Protocol; an expert group meeting on article 10 of the Protocol; and meetings of the informal advisory committees on capacity-building and the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House. The outcomes of this work will be made available for the consideration of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol.

66. A number of improvements have also been made to the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House. Furthermore, the first permits or their equivalents constituting internationally recognized certificates of compliance have been published in the Clearing-House. A number of capacity-building activities, including training modules, have also been organized.

**5. Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity**

67. As at 16 June 2016, the Cartagena Protocol had received 170 instruments of ratification, accession, approval or acceptance.

68. To prepare for the eighth meeting of the Conference of Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol, which will take place concurrently with the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties from 4 to 17 December 2016 in Cancun, Mexico, a number of meetings and activities have been organized. Of note among these was a capacity-building project undertaken on a pilot basis from October 2015 to May 2016 in over 22 countries. The outcome of the project

will be presented to the eighth meeting of the Conference of Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol.

69. A number of meetings of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Biosafety Clearing-House were also held and made a range of recommendations to the eighth meeting of the Conference of Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties designed to strengthen the Biosafety Clearing-House. Considerable work was also undertaken on the document entitled "Guidance on risk assessment of living modified organisms" on the basis of comments provided by parties, other Governments and relevant stakeholders, through a practical testing of the Guidance. An Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment and Risk Management has also been meeting on an intersessional basis, and a revised version of the Guidance is expected to be finalized for consideration by the eighth meeting.

70. Similarly, considerable work has been undertaken on an intersessional basis on the elements of a framework for conceptual clarity on socioeconomic considerations, which will be made available to the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties.

**6. Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety**

71. The Nagoya-Kuala Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which was adopted in 2010 at the fifth Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties, will enter into force on the ninetieth day after the date of deposit of the fortieth instrument of ratification, accession, acceptance or approval by the parties to the Cartagena Protocol. As at 16 June 2016, a total of 35 such instruments had been deposited.

**C. Progress made in the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and difficulties encountered in the process of implementation**

72. The fourth edition of *Global Biodiversity Outlook* provided a midterm review of progress towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The report concluded that there had been encouraging progress towards meeting some elements of most Aichi Biodiversity Targets, but, in most cases, this progress would not be sufficient to achieve the Targets unless further urgent and effective action was taken to reduce the pressures on biodiversity and to prevent its continued decline. Since the publication of the fourth edition, additional information from updated and revised national biodiversity strategies and action plans, as well as additional fifth national reports, have been assessed. The information in these documents and other information reinforce that overall conclusion.

73. National biodiversity strategies and action plans are the principal instrument for implementing the Convention at the national level. Since 1993, 185 parties have developed at least one such strategy or action plan, while 11 parties have yet to submit their first. Since the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the majority of parties have initiated revisions of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans in response to decision X/2. A total of 67 parties met the 2015 deadline, and 12 others had submitted their national biodiversity strategies and action plans by 15 February 2016, for a total of 79. This represents approximately 40 per cent of the parties to the Convention.

74. The majority of national biodiversity strategies and action plans developed or revised since the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties contain targets related to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, although, for some Targets, such as Targets 3, 6, 10, 14 and 17, there were many national biodiversity strategies and action plans without associated national targets or commitments. Targets 1, 9, 11, 12, 16 and 19 are the Targets with the greatest number of broadly similar national targets or commitments. Overall, the majority of national targets and/or commitments contained in the national biodiversity strategies and action plans were lesser in scope and level of ambition than the Targets or did not address all of the elements of the Targets.

75. Information contained in 166 fifth national reports on the status of, trends in and pressures on biodiversity was used to determine overall progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This information indicates that the majority of parties have made progress towards the Targets, albeit at a rate that is insufficient to allow the Targets to be met by the deadline of 2020 unless additional actions are taken. Overall, the assessment of information in the national reports indicates that between 64 and 87 per cent of parties are not on track to attain a given Aichi Biodiversity Target.

#### **D. United Nations Decade on Biodiversity: International Day for Biological Diversity**

76. The International Day for Biological Diversity was celebrated on 22 May 2016 under the overarching theme "Mainstreaming biodiversity; sustaining people and their livelihoods". A total of 62 parties held related celebrations, as did several organizations and United Nations entities.<sup>7</sup> Several high-level messages were also received on the occasion of the International Day. In his message on the occasion, the Secretary-General pointed out that biodiversity and the ecosystem services it supports are the foundations for life on Earth and the livelihoods and well-being of people everywhere. Protecting biodiversity and preventing further losses was an essential investment in our collective future. The Secretary-General pointed out that biodiversity was an important cross-cutting issue in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While Sustainable Development Goal 15 explicitly recognized the importance of halting biodiversity loss, other Goals recognized the importance of biological diversity for eradicating poverty, providing food and fresh water and improving life in cities. The Secretary-General emphasized that the responsible use of natural resources was essential for sustainable development and that mainstreaming biodiversity would ensure that efforts addressing development needs and protecting the environment were mutually supportive.

77. The Executive Secretary of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in his message, indicated that the theme of the International Day for 2016 would also be the focus of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. He stressed that mainstreaming biodiversity considerations across sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry and aquaculture was essential in ensuring not only the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, but also the continued vitality of these sectors. The value of biodiversity for achieving economic and social goals had been recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the

<sup>7</sup> See [www.cbd.int/idb/2016/celebrations](http://www.cbd.int/idb/2016/celebrations) for details.

Sustainable Development Goals, and implementation of the Goals would therefore also help countries to achieve the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.<sup>8</sup> The Convention on Biological Diversity footprint on social media also showed a marked increase during the celebrations on the International Day.

## **E. Recommendations**

78. The General Assembly, at its seventy-first session, may wish to, inter alia:

(a) Call upon all parties to increase their efforts to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and to mainstream and integrate biodiversity in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) Invite all parties and relevant United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds, programmes and regional commissions to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (2011-2020);

(c) Call upon all States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(d) Call upon all parties to the Convention that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(e) Call upon all parties to the Convention that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and its Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress.

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<sup>8</sup> Other high-level statements are available from [www.cbd.int/ldb/2016/messages](http://www.cbd.int/ldb/2016/messages).